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a masterpiece of refined, albeit somewhat theatrical cleverness.

The great need of the American world of art is—artists who can draw in a vigorous, correct and living manner. To do that requires a power of intellectual energy possessed only by a man of strong nervous system, one strong enough to engender a will-power sufficiently gripping to hold the mind and attention true to the closest observation of nature, the most faithfully lifelike rendering of the thing seen. All the better if he slightly stylizes what he sees, as Rubens did.

It must always be remembered by some of our readers that, everything being equal in two works of art, that is the greater of the two which expresses most profoundly and completely the central idea or emotion it is supposed to express: First, in the totality of the work and second, in the one or two faces of the main figures about which the whole drama of the work revolves. In fact, in the final analysis, not composition or drawing or technique or color should be the highest aim in a work of art, but completeness and satisfying adequacy of expression, to which end all the other art powers must act as means and instrument.

The face of Christ in Leonardo's "Last Supper," the face of the Sistine Madonna by Raphael, the faces of the Marquis of Spinola and Justin of Nassau in "The Lances" by Velasquez are the keynotes of those three masterpieces. The adequacy or inadequacy of the rendering of what ought to be expressed on those faces determines the place occupied by each of those pictures in the scale of excellence in the hierarchy of art. In the case of the picture by Velasquez—which he nearly ruined through violating the law of the concentration of effects—he saved it only by the masterly sufficiency with which he expressed on the face of Spinola the sympathetic

gallantry in which he is accepting the keys of Breda from the defeated Justin of Nassau. In fact, these two figures represent the highest flight of Velasquez as an expressive artist.

In this picture by Rubens, on page 199, the expression of the thing to be rendered, namely, the joy of living, is conveyed through the totality of the picture and then in a supreme way through the face and torso of Silenus, while in Watteau's picture the same joy of living is expressed only in the totality of the picture and not with any intensity through the individual figures or groups. In fact, it is evident that Watteau, being fundamentally a decorative and not an expressive artist, sacrificed profundity of expression of emotion to surface and decorative beauty, in which he succeeded. But while the decorative beauty of his picture is no greater than that of Rubens, only different in kind, it falls short in convincing adequacy of expression. Hence, while pleasing to the mind it fails powerfully to rouse our emotion. Rubens' picture not only charms our mind by its supreme intellectual qualities but it stirs our emotion and laughter profoundly—at least when we see it for the first time. That is why it is a great work of art, while Watteau's work, falling short of supreme greatness, is only clever.

But it is so dextrous in touch, so exquisite in melody of line, so deliciously *bravura* in its detail, so suggestive of a Frenchified paradise of Haroun al Raschid, that it is at once a perfect example of motiveless art for art's sake and of spirituelle cleverness; therefore is it fit to serve as a drop-curtain in the greatest opera house in the world to which mankind might come for one of the most necessary medicines—relaxation!

Not seriously great, yet greatly clever, it will never inspire to lofty effort—but it will always help to dispel our gloom.

## A TRIVIAL WORK OF ART

### "THE POOR FISHERMAN" BY PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

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NOTHING is more important for that portion of the American public which is truly interested in art and æsthetics than the acquisition and the confirming of the habit of discrimination, viz.: of discriminating between the great and the clever, the trivial and the degenerate works of great artists.

For example: Michelangelo, judged by what he accomplished in architecture, sculpture, painting and poetry, was, without a doubt, the greatest all-round artist the world has produced. But should that hypnotize us to refrain from condemning his failures?

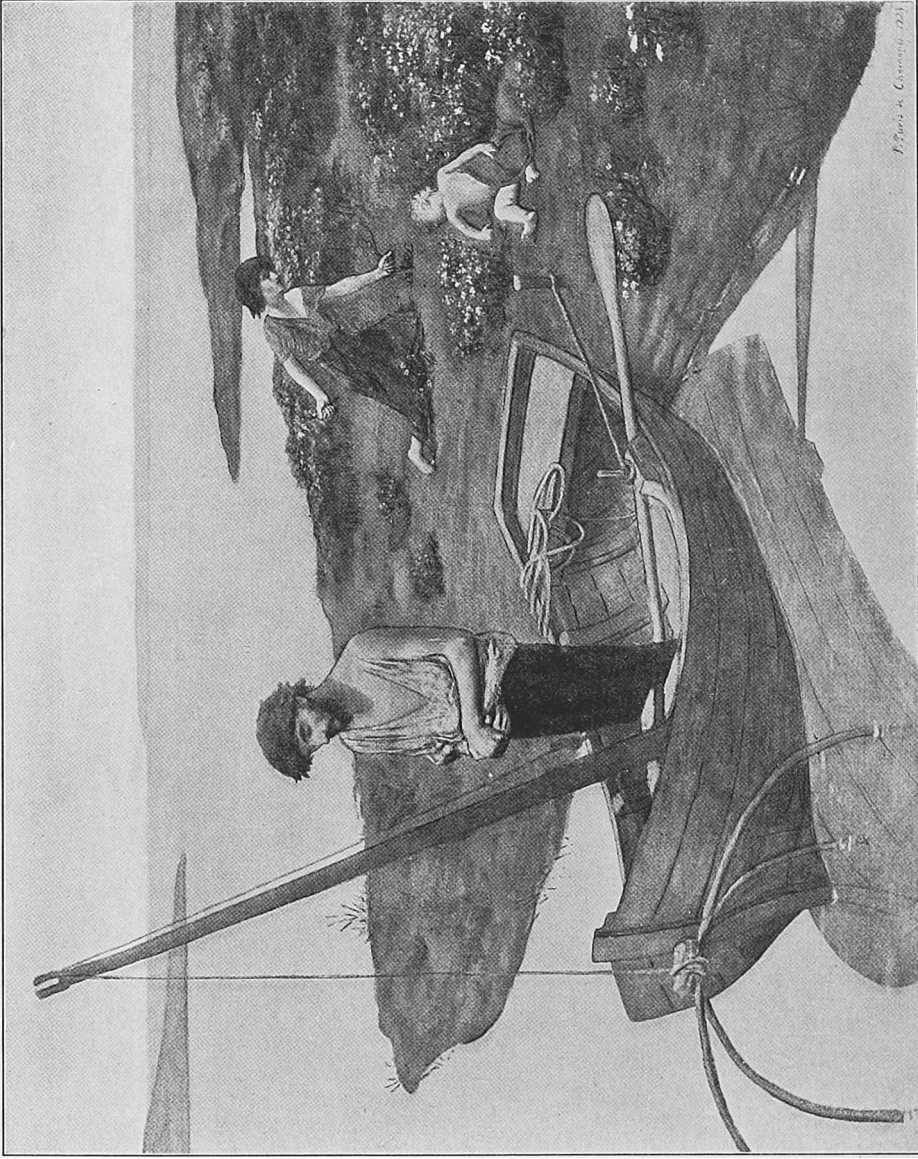
His nude "Christ" the most childish "Christ" ever perpetrated. It is worse than trivial and mere waste of good marble.

The same may be said of Puvis de Chavannes. He was one of the world's great artists. His two large decorations of "Peace" and "War" in the Museum of Amiens are two of the greatest achievements in decorative art since the Renaissance—equal in their way even to the best of that epoch, in dignity of conception, splendor of composition, and refined individuality in style and manner of execution.

But, shortly after he painted those grand decorations he seems to have come under the spell of the absurd "Modernists" who did not make the expression of their native individuality their goal, but set out in pursuit of a silly "individualism." That is to say, of a peculiar shouting style or manner, one never heard of or seen before and never to be seen again.

Therefore in his next great decoration, namely, in the Panthéon at Paris "St. Denis Blessing Genevieve," he departed from the consummate elegance and naturalness of the drawing in the Amiens pictures of "Peace" and "War" and adopted a new "system" of draughtsmanship, one giving the impression that the drawing had been done with an axe instead of with a brush or pencil, so angular and coarse it is. And since then nearly all of his works have been marred more or less by such coarse and angular drawing.

On the next page we give an illustration of his "Poor Fisherman," still, perhaps, in the Luxembourg Museum. It is an absolutely trivial work; and, com-



*P. Puvis de Chavannes (1859)*

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"THE POOR FISHERMAN" BY PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

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ing from him, was a complete surprise and much criticised at the time.

In the first place the lines of the composition are so zigzag that the work is irritating instead of soothing to the eyes. Then the sprawling of the badly drawn child over a low shrub, every leaf and branch of which would prick out of it all sense of sleep or even of comfort, is absurd.

Then the head of the mother is too large, and the hair that of a man rather than that of a woman. Then the man looks "sawed-off." For he is represented as standing with his knees against a seat in the boat. But where is the rest of his lower legs? The boat is either not deep enough or his lower legs are abnormally short, or sawed-off. This is also manifestly absurd. Then the head is so childishly constructed as to be ridiculous.

Moreover, what is he doing—praying, fishing, philosophizing over his destiny, or what? The whole thing is childish to a degree. Here we have a meaningless "individuality" with a vengeance.

The picture has but one redeeming feature—its charming color. A delicate general tone of mauve pervades the whole creation, and the gradation of the tones in the water are so skilfully painted that we are drawn into the far distance whether we will or no. That is, the *values* of the picture are remarkably true.

And for this alone he ignored everything else—elevation and common-sense of conception, beauty of line and truth in composition, clarity of meaning, and impeccableness in drawing and construction of the bodies. In short, it is futile in every element of our power except that of color and that is not enough to save any picture from hopeless triviality.

Why did he produce this work? Seemingly as a basis for solving a color problem; and, having solved it, his friends in the Modernistic art party induced the government to buy it for the Luxembourg Museum—oblivious of the fact that mere color in a picture is, in the final analysis, so secondary in importance in any work of art that it never did and never will save it from ridicule, if the other elements of art power in the work are not of a high order.

Compared with his marvelous and poetic "Peace" and "War" at Amiens, it is a sad commentary on how a great man can, under the spell of the propaganda of an "ism," forced on the world of art by his friends, abdicate his seat on high, descend and fuss about with a lot of bedaft and benighted chasers after salvation in such a foolish, narrow, uncreative ideal as "Individualism" à l'outrance, in the pursuit of which they gain nothing but a puerile, often degrading, but always artificial accent, and lose that which should be their chief glory—their own, true individuality.

In a future number we will reproduce the two fine decorations of Puvis at Amiens.

## A DEGENERATE WORK OF ART

### "BATHERS" BY CÉZANNE

*See page 204*

EXPERTS in insanity tell us that we have men who are totally insane and others who are half-insane. This latter class comprises men who are not so insane as to be dangerous maniacs, fit for strait-jackets, but who are nevertheless not really sane and who, now and then, reason with such cleverness in a circle round about a fallacy that most men incapable of the concentration needed to detect the joker in a system of metaphysics are often swept off their feet and fall victims to their false philosophy. Such men have besides a sense of detachment from their fellows and normal life that they willingly become martyrs and even find pleasure in it.

Such men become Saint Anthonys, Simon Stylites, Saint Jeromes, etc., and willingly make sacrifices of all that average men think essential to comfort when they are in pursuit of some bumble-bee of intellectual aberration that may have happened to cross their narrow mental vision early in life.

Experts in the various forms of semi-insanity tell us that one of the surest signs of semi-dementia is the inability:—

First: To see form as it actually is.

Second: A dislike for form as it actually is.

And that naturally, and by a tendency only half-human they actually prefer exaggerations of form, badly drawn form and disproportions in form.

Third: These semi-insane men are also harassed by an egotism so much greater than that the average normal man is blessed with, or even than that the average totally insane man is smitten with—that

the result is a veritable ego-mania, which drives them to seek to be so different from their fellow-men as to be often strange and grotesque. This, in order that passing mankind shall certainly not fail to notice them.

Now when these semi-insane happen to be bitten with a desire to shine in Art they are sure to quit the normal ways of seeing, feeling and doing things and to go to the abnormal; finally, under the stimulus of a love for suffering and of parading they creep farther and farther toward the abnormal until they are completely insane. Then it is they enter the field of a superman-metaphysics and spin out, as a spider his web, the most plausible theories of aesthetics; and they do this so cunningly that the gad-about who wander in and out of the avenues of the world of art are taken in, and to such an extent are they duped that they resent having these men called insane.

They remind one of a late philanthropist who some time ago was lured into the belief that a certain patient in a certain sanitarium was wrongly incarcerated. He went there determined to liberate him and took with him two witnesses to testify, from actually hearing the more than rational talk of the maniac, that he was sane.

All went well until the witnesses were thoroughly convinced. They were about to leave and prosecute the physician in charge for illegal sequestration when all of a sudden the maniac kicked and punched the deluded altruist so violently that the laugh was